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AUTHOR Naik, Chitra; And Others
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ABSTRACT

The volume contains two studies from India and Thailand on the education of women, and rural women especially, who are deprived or disadvantaged. The Indian study, "Education of Girls and Women in Deprived Groups," presents a viewpoint on deprivation in society in general, and India specifically. The concomitant of deprivation is defined as the extensive privilege of some sections of society who possess overriding authority for coercing other sections into submission. Deprived girls and women are seen as usually being denied the equality of conditions conducive to efficient learning and working; they also suffer from psychological effects resulting from their nurture and from the forces of development. The educational situation of rural girls in India is illustrated through a successful story of non-formal education programmes in Maharashtra State. Thai experiences are illustrated in "Education for Disadvantaged Women." Although Thai women generally are seen as having much better literacy rates than elsewhere in Asia, educational attainment of the majority of women is still very low, particularly in rural areas and for minority ethnic groups. Among five major work plans cited for rural women are a plan for raising income and generating employment, and a plan for providing formal and non-formal education. (BRR)

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Asian Programme of Educational Innovation for Development

EDUCATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT -A Portfolio of Studies

Volume 2 Education for disadvantaged women

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Volume 1 – Education and the rural community

Volume 2 – Education for disadvantaged women

Volume 3 – Health and nutrition education

Volume 4 – Manpower, science and technology and extension education

Volume 5 – Inter-agency and inter-institutional co-operation

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PREFACE

The developing countries of the world today, particularly in the Asian region, are passing through a critical period. Most countries are faced with the problems of growing population, recurrent food shortages, illiteracy, malnutrition, environmental pollution and economic and social disparities. There is a big gap between those living in the urban and rural areas. The rural poor, who constitute the overwhelming majority of the population, are often neglected and deprived of the benefits to which they are entitled within their own societies. Thus the majority of them are malnourished and in poor health, illiterate or with a low level of education and with low income. The picture is even more gloomy with respect to women. This unhappy situation stems from a variety of factors, psychological, cultural, social, educational, economic and political.

The plight of these impoverished men and women has been felt by all the governments and several national and international agencies. Ways and means to solve the problems have been proposed and actions taken under various kinds of projects. There is a call for priority to be placed on agrarian reform and direct aid to the rural poor and for improvisation of simple low-cost technology to increase production and improve the processing of food and the living standards of the rural poor. Attempts have also been made to extend the services of government such as health and nutrition and education services and agricultural extension services. But in most cases these services do not reach the low income and deprived groups, either because they are not aware of the services available and do not know how to make use of the services or because of other socio-economic reasons.

In the area of education there has been a shift in priorities which entails more emphasis on distribution of educational services and equality of access to education. This change is prompted not only by humanitarian concerns, but also by important political and economic considerations. Dissatisfaction with the inability of the existing education system to cope with the problem of disparities has impelled the search for alternatives to formal education. Education for rural development as a new concept in education has been introduced. It is the kind of education which covers activities where educationists, community leaders and other groups are prepared to collaborate effectively with other agencies within a broadly-conceived multi-dimensional programme of rural transformation. The focus of the activities is on the development of rural communities. Education for rural development, i.e. education linked with the programme of rural development, is provided mainly through informal and non-formal modes, while at the same time linkages are established with the formal education system. The nature of the educational programme is dictated by the "total rural development" programme, its multi-agency character and multi-pronged approach to the problems. As seen in the countries in Asia, a non-formal educational programme includes a variety of aspects of education such as health and nutrition, agriculture, general education and skills development. In some countries science and technology education in the form of extension or out-of-school education is provided as an instrument for sustained improvement of technology in rural areas. Special programmes for women and deprived groups have

also been launched to remove the socio-economic disparities between men and women as also between the privileged and underprivileged sections of the two groups.

This portfolio is a compilation of studies which reflect different facets of the concept of education for rural development. The thrust is towards improving and transforming the economic and social life of the rural poor, where the basic human services are critically important – food, nutrition, health and education.

The publication is in five volumes, each of which is preceded by an introduction which gives the summary of the volume.

The first volume describes in brief the status of rural education in five countries, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, and the Republic of Korea. Problems in rural education in the countries and ways to solve such problems are also discussed.

In the second volume, experiences of two countries, India and Thailand, in the education of disadvantaged women are presented, showing how educational programmes are planned to minimize the disparities between the advantaged and disadvantaged groups.

The third volume deals with the problems of health and nutrition education in general, and the case study of the nutrition education programme in Indonesia and a study on research findings in health education in the Philippines in particular.

Volume 4 of the publication presents three studies on three aspects of rural development. The first is manpower planning and training programmes for self-employment in rural areas. The second study discusses out-of-school science and technology for rural development, and provides examples of linkages between science activities and rural development. The third study is on extension education aiming at integrated rural development.

In the last volume of this publication, two studies on inter-agency and inter-instructional co-operation in rural development are presented, one by Pakistan and another by Thailand.

The Asian Centre of Educational Innovation for Development (ACEID) is grateful to the authors of the studies for their contributions to the preparation of this portfolio. It is published in the hope that it will be of help to teachers and administrators as well as those concerned with education in rural areas in their efforts to raise the social and economic status of the rural poor.

INTRODUCTION

This volume includes two studies on the education of women who are deprived or disadvantaged. The Indian study entitled "Education of girls and women in deprived groups" presents a viewpoint on deprivation in society in general, and in India in particular. As viewed by the author, the concomitant of deprivation is the extensive privilege of some sections of society who possess overriding authority for coercing other sections into submission. Deprivation thus betokens a lack of social morality in the power that governs the society. The higher the deprivation, the lower the social morality of those who permit deprivation to continue. To solve this problem, traditional norms of the society must be changed.

Deprived girls and women are usually denied the equality of conditions conducive to efficient learning and working. They also suffer from psychological effects resulting from their nurture and from the forces of development. The education programmes designed for them should take these factors into consideration. The programmes may require a difference in treatment from group to group and from place to place. A universal programme, however, may be organized for deprived women anywhere, though the details of action which must accompany the universals would differ, from place to place. Since the deprived groups are generally illiterate, literacy and numeracy is an inescapable component of their education. Health, nutrition, environment, sanitation, maternal and child care would be necessary. In addition, the most important component should be opportunities to participate successfully in the decision-making process.

The case of education for rural girls in India as presented in the study illustrates a successful story of non-formal education programmes provided for children and women in Pune District in Maharashtra State. It shows a variety of literacy programmes such as evening classes for children and parents, afternoon classes for labourers and classes for illiterate inmates. In the health education programme village women are recruited as health instructors, providing literacy, numeracy and health instruction during home visits. The income-generating programme which is also provided consists of craftwork, preparation of preserves, consumer co-operatives and small-scale industries like match making, hosiery and handmade stationery.

The Thai experiences are illustrated in the study on "Education for disadvantaged women". In general Thai women seem to be much better off than those in many countries in Asia. Literacy among women has increased from 40.1 per cent in 1947 to 74.8 per cent in 1970. By now the percentage of literacy must be higher. In all levels of education the enrolment for girls has increased rapidly. At the university level, in less than ten years the percentage of women students increased from 30 in 1969 to 44.1 in 1977. In spite of all the progress, the educational attainment of the large majority of women is still very low, particularly of those in the rural areas and those belonging to minority ethnic groups. Five major work plans for women in rural areas are cited, namely, (1) plan for raising income and generating employment; (2) plan for providing formal and non-formal education; (3) plan for improving public health and nutritional services; (4) plan for establishing, executing and co-ordinating infra-structure; and (5) plan for survey and research. Under these plans several agencies, both government and private, will be involved and a wide variety of programmes organized. A large number of women have benefited from the programmes, particularly the non-formal vocational programme and group development programme.

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EDUCATION OF GIRLS AND WOMEN IN DEPRIVED GROUPS

by

Chitra Naik*

The urgency for educating the deprived

The close relationship between the educational levels of different population groups and the pace of development in their society is receiving a fresh look from the interests concerned. The prevalent world-trends in educational policy-making and planning reflect much disenchantment with the formal education system, which has failed to relate itself to the changing socio-economic patterns of life in advanced as well as developing countries. While in some countries schooling has led to over-organization of society, in others it has served to strengthen the traditional power-structure and neglected the weaker sections of society to such a devastating extent that an impending socio-economic disorganization has begun to stare them in the face. In giving direction to educational policies and planning, the role of political decisions is becoming increasingly clear. In the 1960s, educational planners realized that education in the twentieth century was neither a matter of simple social reform nor of providing a consumer service uniformly to all. They stressed planning for human resource development for economic growth. But this new approach, and most of their planning models too, proved unworkable. The political tendency to use education as social control was growing but had evidently escaped the planners' range of perception. Many a good plan for taking education to everyone – through the formal system, of course – slowly disintegrated year after year. As the plans faltered and floundered, fresh insights began to be gained into the intricacies of the debacle. Pointing out these trends, Torsten Husen has said, "Educational injections, formally conceived, were regarded as the main means for promoting development. Because development was to be reflected in Gross National Product, the main concern was with size and quantitative expansion, and to this end, ambitious enrolment targets were set. Since then, we have lived through a period of criticism and disenchantment with formal education. It has become increasingly evident that education does not operate in a social vacuum and that institutional arrangements should correspond to the wider societal framework which sets the limits to planning and reform." And further, "The shift in priorities over the last ten years entails more emphasis on distribution of educational services and equality of access to education and less emphasis on sheer numbers and formal schooling."[1]

The emphasis on equality of access to education has brought into the limelight the need to search for alternatives to formal education. Arguments have been pressed for multi-point entry into education and greater attention to the political awakening and citizenship education of the young and middle-age groups in developing societies.[2] Human resource development is considered to be as much of a cultural and political process as educational. The self-complacency of the educational world has been greatly disturbed on realizing that, at bottom, education is more a question of politics than economics.

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* Dr. (Mrs.) Chitra Naik is a staff member of the Indian Institute of Education at Pune, India.

The questions of means and ends in education are so involved that they can rarely find clear-out and quick answers. But despite some confusion about purposes and processes, there is a global acknowledgement of the shortcomings of educational policies which ignore the principles of equality and redistributive justice. The concern for restoring to the weaker sections of society their fundamental right to education is again being stressed, not simply from humanitarian but political and economic considerations as well. As regards women, it is not that they have been left out of the stream of education entirely. But the hurdles in their path have been many. Cultures which are habituated to the subordination of women have offered them only partial educational opportunities. Their ascribed role as 'inside' workers who are homebound as against the 'outside' role of men who enjoy a full citizenship, has been a serious barrier in their way. In the case of women who happen to combine the 'inside' and 'ouside' roles, neither has been found satisfying because of the impossible demands this combination makes on their time and energies. The infrastructure of education, which in any case is geared to serve the privileged and not the neglected or the deprived, takes little notice of the facilities which are essential for bringing girls and women within the fold of education. These matters have been debated and discussed to some extent in the past also. That they have begun to receive somewhat increased attention in recent years is probably due to two reasons; the first seems to be the urgency for educating the deprived groups felt all over the world, in the interest of finding correctives to the growing economic imbalance between advanced and developing countries; the interest which the International Women' Year generated in the status and education of women is obviously the second reason. The concern for the removal of socio-economic disparities between men and women, as well as between the privileged and under-privileged sections of men and women, has long been felt from the standpoint of fundamental human rights. But the atmosphere of urgency is surely recent and the educational focus on the deprived of the world, even by politicians, perhaps hints at the anxiety which the deprived are causing to the privileged for politico-economic reasons.

Deprivation and development

Deprivation by itself is not a social malady. It is a symptom, an indicator of a serious imbalance within the power structure of a society. The concomitant of deprivation is the extensive privilege of some sections of society who possess overriding authority for coercing other sections into submission. Deprivation thus betokens a lack of social morality in the powers that govern society. It makes little difference whether they are political, economic or religious. They are immoral because they deny not only power but even the basic human rights to some and assume unchallengeable authority over all resources and potentials of society. Unfortunately, the dependency of the deprived groups on the pleasure and favour of the authority groups becomes a habit with both. A kind of uneasy peace exists between the two. There is no energetic demand for the minimum fundamental human rights on the part of the deprived nor is there any intention to concede them, in reality, by those in authority. The moving brilliance of the rhetoric of the powers that be in national and international meets which call for an end to deprivation, misleads the world. There are, among these, certain sections which are convinced that deprivation is a normal feature of human society and some marginal attention to the deprived groups by way of charity should be enough, forgetting that

the real question raised by the existence of deprived groups in a society is that of its social ethics. The higher the deprivation, the lower the social morality of those who permit deprivation to continue. Therefore, changing the traditional behavioural norms of the society where deprivation exists and ensuring the practice of social ethics are the major components of development.

Development can be ideally attempted by persuading the deprived to awake and arise to self-determination. Stimulating wisely planned benevolent action for change on the part of the privileged or shocking the privileged as well as the deprived into altering their ways by a radical measure, that is, coercion in some form or the other, are two more possible but not ideal ways. If the second option of benevolence is accepted by the leadership in government and society, the corresponding step to be simultaneously taken would be to awaken the deprived group to shake off its servility and respond to benevolence by self-respecting participation. Further, the benevolently inclined privileged group would have to learn to shed its overriding authority and prepare itself for a gradual but firm self-regulation of its greed. Steps of this nature would certainly mean wide-ranging social changes, which would radically alter conditions of living and working right across various social strata. But new norms of behaviour cannot be considered, accepted and internalized by individuals and social groups without an all-pervasive and strong movement for change. Whether persuasion or coercion is to be the means for this change would depend on the history of the people concerned, the kind of culture they are moulded by and, most importantly, by the quality and numbers of their leaders who would work for change. It is the ultimate vision of society, the ideology to be commonly shared by all, that would bring about development and answer the question of deprivation. As David Maclelland has said:

> There is no real substitute for ideological fervour. Ideological movements of all sorts are an important source of the emotional fervour needed to convert people to new norms. They are necessary and should be supported in whatever form it is politically feasible or most congenial to the country concerned.

Among the poor nations and the deprived sections, economic betterment, often indicated by the term 'integrated rural development' is being greatly emphasized. It is right to do so. But it has to be looked upon as a short-term goal set against the total perspective of achievement of full human rights by all, in all facets of life. If this argument is accepted, the education of the deprived groups, both men and women, acquires a meaning that goes much beyond the 'skill-training' immediately needed for earning or producing a bit more to be able to escape the spectre of hunger.

The achievement of development in these terms is admittedly a complex and long-term goal. The kind of education that should support it has also to be visualized in its full panorama as a complex process of life-long education. Though the deprived are anxious that God should first appear to them in the form of bread (as Gandhiji said) their minds are innately alive to cultural interests, to problems of power, to the pleasures of knowing more about themselves and the world. All these urges lie dormant in the wounded and weakened minds of the deprived.

There would be some justification, temporarily, for the argument that since the levels of consumption of the deprived must be raised without delay, instruction in skills

leading to quick monetary returns must be imparted to them. But this is not development. Also, it has to be stressed ceaselessly that as a major step in overcoming the disturbing and disgraceful consumption gap, whether between rich nations and poor nations or the rich people and poor people within a nation, distribution policies must undergo a radical change all over the world. Attempts to raise production through the skill training of the deprived, without other fundamental measures of social justice and equality, would be analogous to nothing more than training a domestic animal to perform a few more tricks so that its master's earnings go on growing, while its own begging habits continue as before.

Integrated rural development projects fail one after the other because the deprived are treated as a means and not as the end, not as the recipients of the fruits of development but as 'inputs' into development, not as self-motivated learners but as people who are so ignorant that they must be taken by the hand like toddlers and 'taught' skills under the tutelage of their instructors, who have to finally report the yields and not how the learners grew into self-respecting men and women. Development efforts by the deprived would be successful if they are intentional, an act of learning which is accepted by them as beneficial to themselves, and which is self-directed and self-suftained. This can happen only if the privileged and the powerful decide to permit them to do so and prepare themselves for equality, for sharing with the deprived the collective fruit of human labour and wisdom. This social morality has to become a major issue in the political and economic policies of a country, in the guidelines of plans for development. Deprivation and development, education and development, are matters related intrinsically to the progress of humanity, of each individual, whichever way an ideology might want to spell out the intricacies of this conundrum.

When considering the problem of educating and helping women from deprived groups to participate in citizenship and development, the first question that comes to mind is how far it is possible to modify the traditional roles and functions ascribed to women and with what speed. The urgency of development calls for rapid changes in the traditions and prevalent norms of life, from several standpoints. Participation of each individual in development implies intelligent and purposeful effort on the part of masses of men and women for their increased well-being, individually and also collectively. It involves both individual and collective decision-making, constant and meaningful mutual communication, planned action and readiness to throw away the burdens of the past in order to build a more equitable, satisfying future. Educating the masses for such a process of change is obviously not a matter of isolated individual instruction. It requires the creation around each learner of an environment of group-affiliation, growth-opportunities and motivating forces which are demonstrably conducive to individual and group advancement. Given an environment of this type, the necessary motivation and the foundational skills which are essential for improving the occupational functionality of the worker and training for increased productivity, could be successfully transmitted by means of suitably designed programmes.

But the dynamics of development also call for learning programmes which are much more subtle than straight skill training. The introduction of deprived groups to a new social vision and perhaps an intelligible political ideology is a rather complex mental

process. It is difficult to convince the oppressed that they are not simply the means of development, slaving for other people in that process, but the end, the focus, and that their labours would make them creators of development for themselves. The link between learning and desirable change can be properly established only when the learners come to understand and appreciate the genuineness of people-oriented plans for development. Otherwise, they listen to speeches, exhortations and eulogies, but remain unimpressed. If they become really conscious of a favourable change in the socio-political forces that govern their destinies, their energies find the much needed outlet and they become ready for participation in development.

Development is a vision of the grandest performance that human beings are capable of.[3] It is the ultimate fruit of their education and striving in personal and social terms. As Bowman says, "Development must be of, by and for the people for the enrichment of human life".[4] It is, therefore, not a few training programmes but a series of healthy interactions between the spheres of knowledge, work, personal life and citizenship, that can prepare individuals and groups for participation in development.

The problem of sex-discrimination

The problem of the education of girls and women hinges upon the inequalities which prevail in the relative status of men and women in a society. Women are affected by the kinds of natural and occupational relationships of inequality that exist in most human groups, as well as by the lower status attributed to them on the basis of sex. For instance, the natural parent-child relationship is always one of inequality, to begin with. The higher status of the parent, however, is temporary and benevolent in the sense that its intention is to help the child to grow into an adult, an equal, and even become superior to the parent. The end of inequality in the parent-child relationship is joyful for the dominant party, that is, the parent. In working life, the worker in a superior position is often a trainer of the subordinate, helping him to rise to equality. But in the case of the man-woman relationship this expectation of gradual equality rarely exists. On the contrary, women are often treated as if they were as dependent as children and as inferior in status as an occupational subordinate. While maintaining the inequalities resulting from the social traditions of sex-discrimination, these further inequalities are usually heaped upon women by men, the dominant sex.

Though socio-economic inequalities and sex-discrimination are two quite separate phenomena, they are similar in certain respects. Some traditionally determined deficiencies get ascribed to specific groups or persons in order to push them to a lower rank and keep them there. Whether ascriptions of inferior roles are made on the grounds of race, sex, class, nationality, religion (or caste, in India), their purpose is the same, namely, preserving the privileged positions of those who have acquired power in the course of history. Thus, inequalities get ascribed to the categorized individual from the moment of birth, and this leaves no scope for him or her for acquisition of equality at any future juncture. Such theoretically attributed inferiority based on illogical human relationships is most condemnable in a world which calls itself civilized. Nevertheless, society has historically created, tolerated and even consciously promoted such illogical patterns of subordination and domination, attaching a permanent stigma to certain groups. For instance, the coloured races are described as inferior to the white races, women are

described as inferior to men, and the upper castes (in India) consider themselves superior to everyone in the world, including the white races. The subordinate roles ascribed to the inferior presuppose certain defects of the mind and body arising out of physiological and biological factors. Women are considered to be the 'weaker sex', the 'dumb dolls' who are physically and intellectually inferior to men. Immaturity, helplessness, incapacity to reason and to take initiatives are the traditionally ascribed shortcomings of women. When national calamities and emergencies arise, however, there is a dramatic change in social attitudes towards women's capabilities. By force of circumstance, they are admitted to the occupational spheres of men and praised for their efficiency. Thus, during the Second World War, women were considered to be brave, intelligent and sufficiently competent to share the war-effort actively. While men were engaged in battle, women were promoted all over Europe and even in the U.S. to take up the so-called 'manly' jobs in factories, offices, and even within the war machine. When such a change happens, it dramatically demonstrates the irrationality of the ascription of inferiority on the basis of sex.[5]

The conflict between the dominant and subordinate sex is not restricted to developing societies. In some form, though not as appallingly as in some religious and ethnic groups, inequality on the basis of sex exists even in advanced countries. In spite of political ideologies which accept full equality for all men and women, and passage of consitutions guaranteeing equality of opportunity, freedom, and dignity of the individual, women are discriminated against by subtle manoeuvres such as declared intentions of protecting the weaker sex, neglecting to provide facilities for them in education and jobs, and by opposing equality on the grounds of socio-economic constraints. The movement for women's liberation from subordination, which has received good support from intellectuals, particularly since the IYW, has uncovered many a covert attempt by politicians, bureaucrats and religious leaders to subvert it by diverse artifices.

It is difficult to believe that instances of sex discrimination are still detected even in the United States, which is a wealthy nation and which is committed, as a matter of its democratic ideology, to offering equal services and educational opportunities to its citizens irrespective of colour, creed or sex. Take the case of Title IX.[6] Over a long period, discrimination was practised in the US against women in the education system, and it was as recently as July 1975 that an end was put to it through the enforcement of the legislation which was passed as Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendment. Title IX is considered to be a historical landmark both in American education and the struggle of American women for ending their subordination. It states that no person in the United States shall be subjected to discrimination on the basis of sex, in any educational programme or activity receiving financial assistance from the Federal Government. Under Title IX, men and women are to receive the same benefits and opportunities for securing jobs and advancements. In the matter of instruction and selection of courses, boys and girls are to receive the same treatment. Yet, in spite of the democratic practices supported by the U.S. government almost since its establishment, the provisions of Title IX were considered by many to be revolutionary. Under the new law, separate lists of men and women teachers are not to be maintained for determining promotion. Still, when there is reduction of staff due to low enrolments, the first victims are women teachers.

The handicaps of women arising from their duties in the family are often so severe that it is not possible for many of them to keep pace with their men colleagues in managing their jobs. In the circumstances, the law which gives equality to women is ridiculed as unrealistic and unduly visionary. The realization which arises from such a situation is that where women are concerned, it is not enough to end deprivation in a general way. Equality of opportunity has to be ensured for working women by providing for them not simply an equality of service conditions but also an equality of work conditions vis-a-vis those enjoyed by men. The denial of proper conditions of work to members of certain sections of humanity means depriving them of the fullest scope in the interest of their job and ultimately in the interest of their own growth and that of humanity. Yet women are subjected to this kind of deprivation all along the line, regardless of whether they are highly educated or occupants of important positions or uneducated members of the toiling masses.

In countries where the attitude of the government towards women is fully egalitarian, legal provisions regarding their working conditions and social and political rights are reflected fairly well in their daily life. No discrimination is practised against them in the world outside the home. In spite of such progressive policies, however, traces of traditionalism still linger and it is not unusual to find a woman even in a communist country complaining about the disinclination of her husband to help her cook or look after the baby. Yet, the social disapproval of inequality in any form whatsoever, especially in the case of women, works as the overall social conscience, preventing individual propensities to the contrary.

Other societies which do not possess a strong socio-political conscience cannot control regressive individual behaviour. In several countries there is now legislation to protect the right of women to equal remuneration for equal work, equal right to property and other benefits. Even so, the machinery to enforce the legislation and to hear complaints and appeals does not easily come into existence because of traditional attitudes. Not only job discrimination or infringement of protective legislation, but even crimes of physical violence against women are still treated in some sections of these societies as non-issues. When cases of injustice to women come up before courts of law, they are heard usually by male judges, among whom there are likely to be some who are tradition-bound. Hardly any provision exists to include women judges on the benches of the courts which hear cases involving sex discrimination and persecution of women. Arrangements to hear cases of physical violence 'in camera' do not exist everywhere and as a consequence, a good deal of such injustice either goes without redress or gets compounded on terms adverse to the woman concerned.

In India, legislation against child-marriages and the custom of dowry, for equal property rights and occupational rights, is notable more for violations than observance. More 'manly' legal intelligence is dedicated to circumventing the law in order to deprive women of their rights than to ensuring the strict practice of those constitutional provisions which would help to remove the poverty and outdated customs which are the basic causes for the temptation to circumvent high-principled social legislation. In the case of the middle classes, this problem is not so grave as in the case of the urban and rural masses.

Education for disadvantaged women

Change and modernization in the rural areas have also begun to work against the interest of rural women. When such traditional womanly tasks as husking the grain, pounding and grinding are mechanized and become less arduous and more remunerative, they get taken over by men. The same happens in the case of cooking and tailoring, and training for these new occupations is designed more for the benefit of men than women. In parts of Asia, women are socially prevented from opening a tailoring shops or working as cooks in hotels. Social disapprobation is not focused on the practice of these skills by woman; it is focused on their use by women for economic independence, for entering the 'outside' world reserved for men. Even today, most of the agricultural extension services offer to women not skill-training in modern agriculture but information in 'home economics' which has very little meaning under conditions of abject poverty. The problem is that though the need for protecting and furthering the interests of women gets theoretical recognition from governments and social leaders, traditions militate against women's liberation from subordination and slavish drudgery. When modern technology displaces them from their ascribed 'inside' tasks, their plight becomes worse than before because they cease to be important participants in economically useful work. As a consequence, their status, vis-a-vis men, also suffers a further decline.

The participation of women in the organized sector is meagre. Even in a country like India, where the constitution guarantees them equality on all counts, the lack of education among women on the one hand and the disinclination of men to permit women to work outside the domestic sphere on the other, are responsible for preventing their free entry into the organized sector.

Politically, women are considered advanced, if they have the right to vote. But in countries where illiteracy is widely prevalent, the vote given to an adult woman, in truth, means two votes for the man in the house. At least in India, most women in the rural area cast their votes as demanded by the male members of the household. Franchise for women, therefore, has only meant the doubling of votes for men. The trends of parliamentary and state elections in India have been studied in detail by social scientists. When the Indian Constitution was adopted, giving equal rights to women it was felt that the representation of women in Parliament and State legislatures would rapidly increase. These hopes ahve been frustrated. Whereas 5 per cent of the representatives in Parliament were women in 1971, the percentage came down to 3.5 in the 1972 elections. In the State legislatures, the story is not very much different and repeats itself at all levels of the administrative structure right down to the village Panchayats.

Considerable emphasis is placed these days on involving women in co-operative enterprise. The real need for a co-operative movement appears to be in the rural areas. It is chiefly in the large towns and cities, however, that women's co-operatives appear to thrive. These are conducted, for the sake of deprived women, by upper-middle-class and middle-class social workers. The level of education, dedication, efficiency and influence of the organizers decides the level of efficiency of these co-operatives. In the rural areas also, middle class women speak for the underprivileged women, often without a first-hand knowledge of what is meant by being deprived or underprivileged. The urban worker does not penetrate sufficiently into the rural areas and particularly among the poverty stricken groups. The rural co-operatives, therefore, are usually in the hands of men, of the village leaders. Instances of women's co-operatives going into liquidation

are many. At such times, it is the deprived who share the losses, while the well-to-do organizers still appear to be doing quite well.

Education of deprived girls and women: constraints and possibilities

As inheritors of the handicaps created by sex-discrimination, women as a group stand deprived of certain aspects of fundamental rights. The sanction of equality of opportunity in education and occupation has not been unequivocal in the case of deprived sections taken together as a category. For women as a whole, and especially for the deprived among them, denial of equality in conditions conducive to efficient learning and working has been a flagrant violation of the very principle of equality. In addition to the actual obstacles placed in women's way by these two factors, psychological problems resulting from their nurture and from the forces of development which intensify their low self-concept as workers, present quite a few dilemmas for the planners and organizers of their education. The question is not concerned simply with the drawing up of suitable learning programmes. How to draw the interest of the learners towards the programmes is the pivotal problem around which plans and procedures should revolve.

No argument is required to prove that the formal system of education and the interests of deprived girls and women can hardly ever coincide. But even non-formal education programmes cannot be evolved for such groups in a uniform and universal fashion. The strategies of operation, determination of content, types of auxiliary programmes, interventions in socio-economic processes around the learners and management may require different treatment from group to group and place to place. Educational work of this unprecedented kind is like playing music by ear, without a written score to guide the performer. It is, therefore, hardly necessary to point out that educational projects for deprived groups should be micro-level efforts, with details of action emerging from the local situation.

Nevertheless, certain guidelines could be universal. Since deprived groups are generally illiterate, literacy and numeracy training is an inescapable component of their education. Health and nutrition, environmental sanitation, maternal and child care (briefly, a consciousness of health-factors) and some knowledge and skills for maintenance of family health, would be necessary. Opportunities to participate successfully in the decision-making process would be the third and the most important component because this is the only key that can enable the oppressed and the deprived to open the doors of the strength necessary to contend with exploitation on the one hand and to become creators of their well-being on the others. Poverty and powerlessness reinforce each other. They can never be eradicated singly. They will have to go out together as the deprived awaken to their own power, learn to analyse their world and redefine their identity as makers of their destiny and not its victims. As this process takes place, the psychological barriers to learning and vigorous action for self-assertion would gradually disappear. It is at this point of learning that the deprived would finally become participants in development. Therefore, all these universals would comprise the learning programme of the deprived anywhere, though the details of action which must accompany the universals would differ from place to place. A committee appointed at the National Conference on Women

and Development held in India in May 1979 spelt out the aims of the programme for women's adult education in similar terms, which are worthy of attention:

a) Making women and men more conscious of their rights and responsibilities, the implications of the law governing women's status in society and developing an understanding about the various manifest and concealed ways which cause women's oppression;

b) Assisting women to achieve economic viability through acquisition of literacy and other necessary skills and resources;

c) Providing women access to knowledge in the other areas, particularly in health, child-care, nutrition, and family planning; and

d) Assisting women to form their own groups for learning and productive activity, and to strengthen their participation and voice in the developmental process.

Micro-level effort: one case and some illustrations

A study of micro-level efforts undertaken for the education of deprived groups, and of girls and women in particular, would reveal a wealth of information on the strategies and processes shared by them. But inferences drawn even from a few selected cases would offer valuable guidelines for action.

Education of rural girls.[7] The case cited here emerges from an action-research project on universalization of primary education launched by a research organization in India. In the project area, which consists of five geographically and economically different pockets in Poona District in Maharashtra State, 89 non-formal evening classes have been started, with an enrolment of 1,431 children of the 9-14 age-group, of whom 1,040 happen to be girls. Only illiterate children have been admitted. Fifteen classes have only girls on the rolls and seventy-four are co-educational. The age-range 9-14 permits many non-school-going brothers and sisters to attend the class together. It was found that in most of the families some children, mostly boys, go to school. Girls are kept at nome for varying reasons. In many families, it has been normal to enroll girls between the ages of 6 and 8, but withdraw them later to help with household tasks and other work.

Most of the non-school-attending children in this project come from the agricultural and allied occupational groups. There is a small proportion of children from the village artisan class, and as many as 600 girls and 250 boys come from families which do not have a steady occupation all the year round. A high correlation has been found between the educational status of the guardians and the schooling of the children. Among the guardians of non-attending children, and particularly among the mothers, literacy was absent. Out of 1,040 girls, only 72 could boast of a mother who had received some primary education. In the case of literate mothers, there was a great desire to send the girls to school and they were happy when the non-formal evening classes were started.

Most of the girls enrolled in the evening centres work at home and also on the farm or in such occupations as raising poultry, tending cattle, dairy farming, collecting fire-

wood, cutting and bundling grass for cattle-feed and a few other miscellaneous occupations. Some of the older girls work as labourers on local construction works. A large proportion of the younger girls look after household tasks and their younger brothers and sisters. Even six and seven-year-old girls are cooks of some merit and take in their stride such chores as washing, cleaning, and poultry raising, along with bathing the baby and playing with the other younger children. Most of the older girls work from about 5 o'clock in the morning to 6.30 or 7 o'clock in the evening. As soon as they eat their evening meal, they rush to the evening class. They collect one another on the way and come to the class in a bunch. The attendance is voluntary. However, it is very good except in heavy rains or at festival time or seasons of heavy agricultural labour. The evening classes are not so much schools as learning centres where recitation of songs, poems and stories is as important as playing language and number games. The home-work consists of observation of personal cleanliness and good health habits, collecting all kinds of specimens from nature as well as waste materials for use as learning aids, and doing traditional craftwork.

Though all these children may be described as belonging to deprived groups, they are a heterogeneous cluster belonging to three different scheduled tribes, eight nomadic tribes, and nine artisan castes. The phenomenon of deprivation in this instance is not peculiar to one caste or community, but to all those who are poor because they are landless, unskilled or possess only the traditional artisan's skills which have now become obsolete. The reasons which motivate the parents to send girls to the evening classes are interesting. Most of the parents feel that the classes provide opportunities for relaxing and enjoying group life. Another reason is that the classes are within a short walking distance of their homes and if a girl is needed at home, she can be called back any moment. Some of the parents, particularly mothers, who had been to a primary school and dropped out, feel that it is necessary to give their daughters a chance which they themselves have missed. The most interesting reason is that literacy for girls has come to be looked upon as a means for improved marriage prospects. In the last 20 years, the number of boys' secondary schools in these areas has increased through private effort and, as a result, the marriage market contains a large number of prospective bridegrooms with a secondary education. They have been asking for educated, at least literate, brides. In general, there is no resistance to the primary schooling of girls, provided it can be done without interfering with their household duties or economically rewarding daytime occupations.

The opening of these classes in remote areas has become possible because of the decision of the project organizers to appoint only local teachers. The areas are difficult of access to outsiders, especially after sunset. In the hilly and forested areas, the fear of wild animals and snakes prevents people from walking long distances. In the rains, some of the villages and hamlets get completely cut off from one another. Some of the tribal hamlets are so small that not more than seven or eight children can be enrolled in one class. In one of the tribal centres, the residents of two hamlets have come together to build for their class a hut with two sections where the pupils spend the night after class is over. One of the rooms serves as a dormitory for boys and the other for girls.. The teacher also spends the night in the hut.

Since these areas are educationally backward there is no alternative but to employ men teachers. Their qualifications range from secondary school certificate to completion of primary school. There are only ten women teachers in the project. But since the classes meet close to everybody's home, it is not unusual for a woman teacher to leave the class in the middle of a lesson to nurse her baby or to cook the evening meal. Husbands and mothers-in-law occasionally send for them to help with some chore or other and the class is left to its own devices. Men teachers are better from this angle. But since rural education has been a comparatively recent movement, most of them are young men in their twenties. The average age of the girl-pupils is around twelve. The thirteen and fourteen-year-olds are at a marriageable age according to the village custom. This creates some problems. In teacher-training sessions, which are conducted in the local situation by a team of trainers, such problems are openly discussed and settled by consensus. In order to establish morally acceptable relationships between the teachers and girl-pupils, the device of calling the teacher 'Elder brother' instead of 'Teacher' is being tried out. All the villagers know this and a kind of social interest has been generated in the proper conduct of the evening class. Communication between the villagers, teachers, and pupils is very good as they all know one another. Besides, none of the teachers is professional. The majority are farmers and the others consist of carpenters, tailors, agricultural labourers and construction labourers.

The training of teachers takes place in the experimental areas, for five days every month, in a central village. As the teachers lose their daily wages during the training period, they are compensated for the loss by means of daily stipends. The learning materials are prepared with the help of the teachers and thus acquire a local vocabulary and local flavour. No distinction is made in the curriculum for boys and girls. All of them are to play, sing, make speeches, read, write, compute, sew on buttons, repair clothes – do whatever is useful and necessary. A class normally consists of not more than twenty pupils. They are divided into four groups (around four kerosene lanterns as there is no electricity in most of the villages in the project area) and each group contains a mixture of boys and girls. Since the boys are in a minority, the girls naturally take the leadership. They help make the time-tables, put the class in order and learn so fast that the project organizers find it difficult to keep pace with their demand for reading materials. The classes have no bells to start and finish their activities. The pupils come in groups as soon as they can and leave as late as they can, carrying the lanterns and accompanying one another safely back home. They take hardly any holiday. In about two years, most of the pupils will have completed studies to the level of standard IV, and learned much more by way of action-programmes in health, hygiene, sanitation, group-living, self-learning and developing habits of decision-making. In a year's time, there have been only four drop-outs: two boys who have been admitted to the local formal primary school and two fourteen-year old girls who got married.

Programmes for women: some illustrations. The majority of deprived women are engaged in earning their own livelihood and supplementing the income of their families. While they should receive information and knowledge about their legal rights, good health habits for prevention of ill health, rules and regulations about wages for certain types of trade, marketing of their produce and similar essential matters with long-term

significance, programmes which result in a quick achievement either of social or economic status become effective entry-points into the process of learning. Literacy-attainment within a short period, health-improvement for children and income-raising activities appear to be the most useful entry-points. Illustrations of these approaches are many and a selected few should serve to build up the argument.

a) *Literacy*

Since lack of leisure to learn constitutes the most severe constraint in women's literacy programmes, efforts have been made to overcome it through various arrangements.

i) In a tribal area, social workers went from hamlet to hamlet and persuaded the tribals to accept an arrangement under which the adult education centre would be attended by men and women on alternate evenings, so that one of the parents would be at home to look after the household. This experiment has worked surprisingly well. A contributory reason for its success has been the absence of sharp inequalities between tribal men and women.

ii) In a small village, the literacy instructor selected a few households every day and spent about 20 minutes with the women in each household in the evening, giving them a literacy lesson and discussing problems of health and nutrition. Sometimes, the women listened to the information while cooking the evening meal. The men-folk favoured this arrangement because it did not require taking the women away from their household duties. With concentrated literacy work for about fifteen minutes a day, the learners made rapid progress. Their performance improved at each successive stage with the growth of their self-confidence.

iii) On several farms, the employers agreed to release men and women labourers for half an hour in the afternoon for literacy training and discussion of farming. These co-educational groups also received health information and family welfare counselling.

iv) In several jails, arrangements have been made to conduct training for the illiterate inmates. Carpet weaving, furniture making, tailoring, laundry-work, shoe-making and such other crafts have been pursued. Marketable goods are produced on a sizeable scale. The advantage here is that the inmates of the jail can devote several hours a day to their education.

v) Education for illiterate women in the organized sector of industry has been arranged in many places not only for literacy and numeracy, but training in certain skills which become necessary as the industry continues to progress.

vi) In the informal sector, several centres have been started for *bidi* workers. The *bidi* is the traditional Indian variety of the cigarette. *Bidis* are rolled by hand and the industry prefers women because of their nimble fingers. The *bidi* factories are usually located in small towns. Women come to the factories from the slum areas in the town and nearby villages. After eight hours of work, they earn about Rs. 4/-. The adult education worker visits the factory in the

afternoon and reads out stories or information while the women sit rolling the *bidis* and listening. The instructor goes to each woman, writes out some words and letters on a slate and teaches her to read. Writing comes to the *bidi*-worker with great difficulty because her fingers gradually become crooked with the constant rolling of the *bidis* and she cannot hold a pen properly. Still, each one learns to sign her name. When the women learn to read, it is not possible for the employers to cheat them out of their due wages. This has led to the closure of some classes.

b) *Health education*

i) In well-known projects like the one at Jamkhed in India where dedicated doctors like Dr. Anil Arole and Dr. (Ms.) Mabel Arole have trained village women as health instructors, home-visits are paid to give both literacy and health instruction.[8]

ii) In a similar experiment, the learners have been given cross-bred cows and a combined learning package of literacy, numeracy, health instruction, and dairying. One-day camps are held periodically to instruct them in all the different contents of their syllabus. The chief motivation for spending the day away from home is the expected financial gain from the cross-bred cow. The cows have been purchased with a government loan which the learners are expected to repay by instalments as soon as their milk business begins to run properly.[9]

c) *Income-generation*

These programmes are the most difficult to organize because they involve the following complex of interrelated factors:

i) A purchasing organization for the finished products;

ii) An organization which can identify the needy women, train them for manufacturing marketable products, offer necessary infra-structure such as capital, workplace, equipment and supervison;

iii) Trainers who understand the background of the learners, methods of working with them, and the requirements of the market;

iv) Readiness on the part of the organizers to diversify the training and production programmes so that economic activities may be carried out at various levels to enable the learners to pick and choose activities according to their needs and abilities;

v) Readiness of the production organizers to meet losses, if necessary, to ensure that the workers are not put to any disadvantage and demoralized;

vi) Readiness of the organization to provide for the women, both while they are under training and engaged in production, such services as creches, nurseries, supply of meals to children and also to the women concerned; and

vii) If production is home-based, provision of supervision to maintain proper standards of production and to collect the finished goods.

The programmes which are generally given to women involve craft-work of different kinds, which finds limited markets in large cities or in foreign countries; preparation of preserves, pickles and condiments; consumer-co-operatives; and small-scale industries such as match-making, hosiery, hand-made stationery articles and so on which receive substantial subsidies from government. The skill training essential for these tasks can be given on-the-job. The training facilities, however, are mostly restricted to large towns and it is the deprived and destitute women from the urban slums who are the usual beneficiaries of income-generating programmes.

As matters stand, only some informal education of deprived women can take place from programmes like those illustrated above. What is necessary are well-designed and carefully organized programmes of non-formal education with close attention to their content, methods of working with deprived groups and arrangements for the trained personnel and infrastructure they would call for. For the deprived sections to organize themselves against oppressive toil and exploitation, a balanced mix of several kinds of education is necessary.

One point that stands out clearly from the kind of illustrations mentioned above is the initiative of social workers and their intensive micro-level efforts. In the second example of health education, the organization which has undertaken the package of training and education, has stood guarantee for the loans from which the cross-bred cattle are bought. It is very difficult to find such illustrations arising from governmental effort in either education or development, though the experience of socialist countries is likely to be different.

To sum up, the problem of the education of deprived girls and women is basically a complex problem of cultural change, of political and economic ideologies directed towards equality and social justice, and of lifting the poor out of their feelings of worthlessness and helplessness. Social and political action which helps them to redefine their identity would alone remedy their psychological disequilibrium. Deprived women and girls are what society has made them. It is for society to decide how ethical it is going to be in the matter of restoring to deprived groups the dignity and power which is theirs by the laws of fundamental human rights.

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EDUCATION FOR DISADVANTAGED WOMEN

by

Thongyoo Kaewsaiha*

Kasama Varavarn*

Thai women have always played a significant role in Thai society. From the old days, they have served as indispensible workers in the fields, managed the households and have been fully responsible for the upbringing of the children.[1] In spite of their considerable contributions, women were rarely encouraged to learn beyond what was considered necessary to become mothers and wives. For centuries, they were trained informally to till the land, search for food, and perform domestic chores. Even when formal schools were established in the reign of King Rama V, opportunities to pursue western-influenced education were limited to young girls from well-to-do and noble families in the capital city of Bangkok.

The first significant impetus for women's education came in 1921 when the Compulsory Act was passed requiring all Thai children aged seven and up to attend primary school, regardless of their sex. Over the next fifty years, the increased availability of school facilities, and changes in role expectations of women together with the creation of jobs for women, particularly in the urban areas, resulted in a marked increase in the enrolment of young girls in the formal school system.[2] By 1975, when the United Nations declared the International Women's Year and subsequently the Decade for Women, the large majority of Thai women had already had access to primary education,[3] and over 100,000 women had graduated from the universities.[4] Women also account for nearly one-third of high ranking government officials[5] and a few have attained positions which hitherto have been limited to men such as membership in Parliament.[6]

While progress in the status of Thai women in certain areas has been remarkable, the overall conditions are far from satisfactory. Disparities in living conditions, opportunities and services are found to exist both between men and women and among different

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* Dr. Thongyoo Kaewsaiha and Dr. Kasama Varavarn are staff members of the Department of Non-formal Education, Ministry of Education, Thailand.

1 For more complete discussion, see Vipa Chulachart, "Introduction", in *Aspects of Thai women today*, a background document presented by the Thailand National Commission on Women's Affairs to World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, Copenhagen, 14-30 July 1980.

2 For more detailed discussion, see Kattiya Karnasuta, "Education and development programs for Thai women," in *Aspects of Thai women today*, background document presented to World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, Copenhagen, 14-30 July 1980.

3 *Report of the labor survey Round 2 July-July 1975*, Bangkok, National Statistic Bureau, 1975, Table 5.

4 *Ibid.*

5 Kattiya Karnasuta and others, *Reflection of Thai women*, Bangkok, Business and Professional Women Association, 1976, Table 5.

6 In 1974, 8 per cent of the Senators appointed were women. For further information, see *Reflection of Thai women*, p. 135-137.

groups of women. A large number of women continue to suffer from problems in their daily life. The potential of women for the development of the country has been widely recognized, but has not yet been fully developed and utilized. In the Fourth Social and Economic Development Plan (1977-1981), a few agencies made headway in implementing educational programmes for women. These activities, however, tended to be limited in scope and to operate independently of each other.[7] In order to obtain a more significant impact, the Fifth Social and Economic Development Plan has given high priority to the development of women and has called upon various agencies to mobilize their efforts towards this end.[8]

This paper is an attempt to examine some of the existing educational strategies and programmes which are provided to out-of-school women particularly in the rural areas. The paper is organized in three sections: an overview of the conditions and problems of Thai women, analysis of development policies and programs that have been implemented in the Fourth Development Plan and finally, some observations on proposed strategy and existing programs.

An overview of the present conditions and problems of Thai women

Attempts to understand the conditions and problems of Thai women are greatly hampered by inadequate data. Through findings of the 1970 Census, the Bi-annual Labor Survey and a series of studies on women which has been conducted within the past few years, we may be able to construct some sketchy profiles of Thai women. Due to the discrepancies in the dates, the samples and the methods of data collection, however, this overview should be regarded only as illustrative examples of the characteristics of Thai Women and some of the problems they encounter in their daily life.

The importance of women in Thai society is best illustrated by sheer numbers within the population. In 1979, approximately 49.6 per cent or 22,907,829 out of the total population of 46,113,756 were women.[9] Thai women are youthful in age structure with approximately 43 per cent under fifteen years of age and 46 per cent or 10.1 million women between the ages of 15-49.[10] It is projected that by 1982, the first year of the Fifth Social and Economic Development Plan, the number of women within the child-bearing and working age groups of 15-44 will reach 11.1 million; 8.8 million or 79 per cent of whom will be living in rural areas; 6.5 million or 58 per cent will be living in 30 provinces classified by the National Social and Economic Development Board as high priority development areas.

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7 "Women's role in national development, in the Fourth National Economic and Social Development Plan", in *Aspects of Thai women today.*

8 Narong Nitayaphorn, "Guidelines for the development of women in the Fifth National Economic and Social Development Plan of Thailand (1982-1986)" in *Aspects of Thai women today.*

9 *Annual report of statistics 1979,* Bangkok, Division of Registration, Department of Local Government, Ministry of Interior, 1979.

10 Out of the total female population of 22,242,000, 7,474,200 are below 11, 10,187,600 are within the age groups of 15-49, and 2,352,000 aged/50 and over. *Report of the labor survey Round 1, Janaury-March 1978.* Bangkok, National Statistical Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand. Tables 1 and 2, p. 1-5.

Table 1. Projected female population in 1982

Age groups	*Total national population 50,115,000*	*Total national female population*			*Female population in the 30 provinces*		
		Urban	*Rural*	*Total*	*Urban*	*Rural*	*Total*
	50,115,000						
0-14		1,550,387	8,480,613	10,031,000	272,700	4,526,820	4,799,520
15-44		2,276,123	8,876,877	11,153,000	324,490	6,197,732	6,522,222
45 Over		650,957	3,092,043	3,743,000	98,453	1,610,679	1,709,132
Total		4,477,467	20,449,533	24,927,000	659,643	12,335,231	13,030,874

Source: Aspects of Thai women.

Table 2. Literacy rates in 1947, 1960, 1970 by sex

Year	*Total population*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total literacy rate*	*Male*	*Female*
1947	12,327,386	6,143,460	6,183,926	53.7%	67.4%	40.1%
1960	18,026,404	9,004,412	9,021,992	70.8%	80.6%	61.0%
1970	23,453,313	11,581,756	11,871,557	81.8%	88.9%	74.8%

Source: Thailand National Education Council, modified from table printed in Kanasuta, *Education and development program for women.*

In order to obtain insights into the qualifications of women, literacy levels and degree of educational attainment are examined. As indicated in Table 2 literacy among women has increased from 40.1 per cent in 1947 to 74.8 per cent in 1970. Higher proportions of men are found to be literate but the gaps have become closer over the years. Literacy levels also vary across age groups. The highest level of literacy (over 90 per cent) is found among women below 24 years of age. The rates gradually drop to 80 per cent among women aged 30-34 and to less than 25 per cent among women over 55 years old.[11] Further comparisons of literacy levels among women in different provinces reveal that literacy rates are particularly low in provinces which are predominantly rural such as Chieng Rai and Mae Hongsorn, and in provinces with high percentages of non-Thai speaking ethnic groups such as Yala, where over 60 per cent of the population are Thai Muslims.

11 *Population and housing census 1970: whole Kingdom,* Bangkok, National Statistical Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Table 12.

Table 3. Literacy rates in 1970 for the whole Kingdom, municipal areas and selected provinces

	Total	*Male*	*Female*
Whole Kingdom	81.8	88.9	74.9
Municipal area	89.3	94.5	84.4
Chiang Rai	65.1	74.0	56.0
Yala	56.0	64.4	47.4
Mae Hong Sorn	39.8	45.6	33.9

Source: Population and Housing Census, Bangkok, 1970, whole Kingdom, Yala, Chieng Rai, Mae Hong Sorn, table 12.

It is important to note that literacy skills in the census are measured by the ability to read and write in any language. If literacy skills are confined only to the ability to read and write Thai functionally, the rates may, in fact, be lower. A more recent survey conducted by the National Education Council on the General Conditions of Parents and Guardians of Prathom 3 Students, for example, found that only one-third of the parents interviewed across the nation were able to read and write Thai fluently.[12]

Examination of statistics on school enrolment and educational attainment clearly indicate that educational opportunities for women have greatly increased over the past 50 years. Women in younger age groups tend to have more access and attain higher levels of education than women in older age groups. In the census of 1970, for example, 7 per cent of women among the 15-19 age group received no education as compared to 33 per cent among the 40-44 age group and 75 per cent among women over 45 years old. The

Table 4. Educational attainment of women 6 years of age and over

	6-14	*15-19*	*20-24*	*25-29*	*30-34*	*35-39*	*40-44*	*45-+*
Total	4,293,790	1,885,371	1,361,717	1,143,377	1,077,088	957,607	766,332	2,405,589
No education	1,283,079	144,140	135,296	167,148	226,161	226,691	254,869	1,818,214
	29.88%	7.64%	9.93%	14.64%	21%	23.6%	33.26%	75.58%
Education attainment	3,010,711	1,741,231	1,226,421	975,959	850,927	730,916	511,463	587,375
	70.12%	92.35%	90.06%	85.36%	79%	76.33%	66.74%	24.42%

Source: Population & Housing Census, Bangkok, 1970, whole Kingdom, Table 15.

increase in enrolment for girls has been so high that in the 1970's, girls accounted for 46-47 per cent of students in all levels of education. At the university, level the percentage of women students rose from 30 in 1969 to 44.1 in 1977.[13]

12 *Report on the general conditions of parents and guardians of Prathom 3 students: report on the study on the efficiency of primary school;* a joint research project of the National Education Council, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Education, Bangkok, 1976.

13 Kamsuta, "Education and Development Programs for Women".

Table 5. Enrolment in formal education

Age	*Level of Education*	*1977*		
		Total	*Male*	*Female*
4-6	Kindergarten and pre-primary	262,184	135,266	126,918
		100%	51.6%	48.4%
7-10	Lower primary	5,233,784	2,718,541	2,515,243
		100%	51.9%	48.1%
11-13	Upper primary	1,721,839	930,296	791,543
		100%	54.0%	46.0%
14-16	Lower secondary	929,548	522,445	407,103
		100%	56.2%	43.8%
17-19	Upper secondary	183,006	88,566	94,440
		100%	49.4%	51.6%
	Vocational	147,997	95,609	52,388
	(Public)	100%	64.6%	35.4%
	Vocational (Private with	84,182	43,373	40,838
	Min. of Ed's accreditation)	100%	51.5%	48.5%
	Teacher	115,117	50,488	64,629
	Training	100%	43.9%	56.1%

Source: National Institute of Development Administration, Research Center, Bangkok, *Selected socio-economic and demographic characteristics of Thai women: country report on income-generating skills for women in Asia*, 1979.

In spite of the impressive increase in educational opportunities for women within the past decade, one should not overlook the fact that the large majority of women are outside the formal school system, and that the level of educational attainment of these women who have left school and are presently in the fertility age group and in the labour force is quite low. In 1978 as high as 23 per cent of women aged 11 and older had less than 4 years of formal schooling, approximately 63 per cent received only lower primary education and less than 4 per cent benefited from university education.

Women residing in urban areas are found to have a higher level of education than women in rural areas. If qualitative measures of education were available, such differences would probably be even more pronounced. In a study on the quality of educational opportunities conducted by the National Education Council in 1975, for example, disparities in terms of school facilities, qualifications of teachers, student-teacher ratio, investment in education, progression and wastage rates and academic performance of students were shown to exist across the regions and within the regions. Provinces in the North-East were found to suffer most in terms of investment, quality of education, educational opportunities and achievement of students.[14]

[14] *Report on equality of educational opportunities: report on the study on the efficiency of primary schools; a joint research project of the National Education Council, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Education.* Bangkok, 1975.

Table 6. Level of education of population 11 years and older

Percentage of population by level of education	*1978*		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*
No School	11.9	7.8	16.0
Less than 4 years	7.4	7.5	7.3
Lower elementary (4 Yrs.)	64.6	65.7	63.5
Upper elementary	7.1	8.2	6.1
Lower secondary	4.4	5.6	3.1
Upper secondary	1.0	1.2	0.8
Lower technical			
Upper technical	1.5	1.7	1.3
University	0.5	0.6	0.4
Teacher training	1.4	1.5	1.4
Others	0.2	0.2	0.1

Source: The labour survey, 1978 rounds.

Table 7. Educational attainment of women aged 11 and older by areas of residence

	Total	*Less than P. 4*	*Lower primary education*	*Upper primary education*	*Secondary education*	*Higher education*
Total	14,767.7	3,830.7	9,155.8	814	709.6	256.6
		25.94%	62%	5.51%	4.8%	1.74%
Municipal	2,446.8	466.4	1,109.2	280.9	448.4	141.4
Area		19.06%	45.33%	11.48%	18.32%	5.78%
Non-municipal	12,320.9	3,364.3	8,046.6	533.1	261.2	115.2
Area		27.30%	65.31%	4.33%	2.12%	0.93%

Source: Report of Labour Survey, Round 1, 1978, Table 4.

In addition to the quality of education, the relevance of education to the daily life of students, particularly those living in rural areas, and the adequacy in preparing school leavers for the world of work have also been questioned.

Finally, it should be noted that in spite of the increased enrolment of women in education, differential sexual preferences continue to prevail in their selection of fields of studies. Girls who go on to higher education tend to enter the fields of humanities, social sciences, and education. Relatively few enter the faculties of law, engineering, agriculture or natural sciences.[15]

15 Kattiya Karnsuta, *Education and development programs for women.*

A review of the educational status of women confirms that significant progress has been made but there remain several areas for improvement before the potential of women, particularly those living in rural areas and out-of-school, will be fully developed.

In order to assess women's condition and their contributions to the family and to the country, one needs to examine data related to marital status, responsibilities in child rearing and the economic status of women.

Table 8. Utilization of female labour by regions

		Whole Kingdom (1)	*Northern Region (151)*	*North Eastern Region (201)*	*Southern Region (251)*	*Central Region (101)*
Total	1	22,422	4,682.9	7,911.9	2,706	4,578.9
Persons under 11 years of age	2	7,474.2	1,563.7	2,899.4	939.4	1,508.6
Persons in working age group 1-2 =	3	14,947.8	3,119.2	5,012.5	3,645.4	3,070.3
Adequately utilized	4	4,819.7	1,092.7	1,186.4	750.4	1,318.2
		32.24%	35.03%	23.69%	20.58%	42.93%
Inadequately utilized	5	2,036.7	406.8	520.7	367.2	356.3
		13.62%	13.04%	10.39%	10.07%	11.60%
Persons not in labour force	6	7,911.3	1,619.6	3,305.3	648.8	1,395.7
		52.93%	51.92%	65.94%	17.80%	45.46%
Students	7	2,102.8	453	529.2	321.8	448.4
Worked around the house & waiting for agricultural season	8+9	4,839.1	944.4	2,490.2	201.5	736.4

Source: Report of Labour Survey, 1978, Pages 1, 151, 201, 251, 101.

According to the Labour Survey of 1978, approximately 40 per cent of women aged 11 and older are married. Analysis of findings from the 1970 Census reveals that the average age of marriage for women for the whole kingdom is 21.9. Women in rural areas tend to marry younger, at the average age of 21.4 in comparison to the average of 24.7 among urban women.[16] The percentage of married women also differs in terms of age structure. Around the age of 15-19, only 11-20 per cent of women are married but by the time the women turn 35, over 80-90 per cent become married.[17]

Data from a study on the status of Thai women in the provinces of Chacheongsao and Lampang provide additional information on the marriage life of Thai women.[18] The study found that most women interviewed made their own decisions in mate

16 Apichat Chamratrithirong, *Nupitiality in Thailand; a cross-sectional analysis of the 1970 census*, Bangkok, Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, 1979, p. 59.

17 *Ibid*, page 58.

18 Chantanee Chaiyasut and others, *Report of a survey on the status of Thai women in two provinces*, Bangkok, National Council of Women, 1977.

selection. Less than one-third of marriages were planned and arranged by parents. Less than one-half of marriages were registered. Once married, over two-thirds of the women lived in a nuclear family, while the rest lived in various forms of extended family. Women were found to play a crucial role in the family. Approximately 70 per cent of women interviewed were in full control of the family budget, thirteen per cent shared the responsibility with the husbands and only thirteen per cent left the husbands to manage the family budget alone: The study also reported that decisions concerning the future of children, family planning and sale of agricultural products tended to be made jointly by husbands and wives. It was only in the case of deciding whether to borrow money that around 40 per cent of the husbands interviewed made the decision by themselves. This may be due to the fact that nearly 80 per cent of the loan contracts were signed by the husbands alone. The large majority of the heads of households interviewed felt that women should participate in the decision making of the family and that women should contribute to the family income.

In terms of responsibility in child rearing, after marriage pregnancy tends to occur every 22 months.[19] Due to such frequent rates of pregnancy, the number of children aged 0-4 who must be taken care of by women is quite high, estimated at 1.032 per 1,000 ever married women.[20] The highest numbers are among women aged 25-29. In terms of quality of health and child care, it is important to note that nearly 90 per cent of deliveries in the rural areas occur at home.[21] In 1972, the number of women who died from complications of pregnancy and the peurperium is reported at 2.2 per 1,000 live births.[22] Due to the shortage of health services in the rural areas, the health of the infants is determined to a great extent by the health and the knowledge of the mothers. On the average newborn infants in the rural areas weigh 2.5-2.6 kilograms, less than the average weight of newborns in middle income families in Bangkok.[23] The rates of infant mortality for the whole kingdom have dropped from 48.9 per 1,000 live births in 1960 to 27.0 in 1972, the highest rates in 1972 being in the Northern region.[24]

The role of women in the upbringing of young children is very pronounced in the *Study on the status of Thai women in two province.* Seventy to ninety per cent of women interviewed breast-fed their children. The large majority of women were consulted or actually made decisions concerning their children. Most of the heads of households interviewed expressed the belief that mothers are important in determining the attitudes and outlook of the children. While most men interviewed felt that women

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19 *Draft of Women Development Five-Year Plan, 1982-1986,* Bangkok, Division of Social Projects, The National Social and Economic Development Board, p. 10.

20 Chamratrithirong, *Nupitiality in Thailand,* p. 80.

21 Visid Prachnabmoh and others, *The rural and urban population in Thailand: comparative profiles,* Bangkok, Institute of Population Studies, Chulalongkorn University, December 1972. Bangkok, p. 68.

22 *Public health statistics, 1972,* Bangkok, Division of Vital Statistics, Department of Health Promotion, Ministry of Public Health, p. 140.

23 *Draft of Women Development Plan,* p. 9.

24 *Public health statistics,* p. 140, 150.

should contibute to family income, when asked about their opinions concerning working mothers, over half preferred that women remain at home to look after the children rather than leaving home to work.[25]

In terms of women's role in the schooling of their children, the "Study on general conditions of Prathom 3 students' parents" found that less than one third of parents helped school children with their home work. While the large majority expressed high aspirations for their children, over 20 per cent admitted that they knew nothing about their children's schooling and over half could not describe the educational system beyond primary level.[26]

If home environments do contribute to the achievement of children in school, these findings may imply that a large number of children in rural areas will not benefit from the guidance of their parents and that education may further widen the gaps between children and parents in rural areas.

Available data indicate that being mothers and wives still constitute the major functions of most rural women, they do not appear, however, to be totally submissive and passive housewives as often believed. In many cases, they seem to exercise a certain influence over the decisions and the directions of the families. Within the constraints of the available data, the survey helps to point out some of the problems that need to be dealt with: poor health conditions of mothers and children which may be due to a lack of knowledge, shortage of health services, poverty, conflicts between the need to earn additional income and childcare and household responsibilities, lack of concern for the protection of marriage laws, and the seemingly increasing gap between the better educated children and their parents.

The potential of women to contribute to the income of the family and to the economic development of the nation has long been discussed. It is necessary, therefore, to examine the economic status of Thai women.

Data from the Labour Survey indicate that while women account for 50 per cent of population aged 11 and older, their potential may not yet be fully utilized. Among women in the working age groups, only 32 per cent are in the labour force and are classified as being fully utilized, 14 per cent are in the labour force but are inadequately utilized, and approximately 53 per cent are not in the labour force. Levels of labour force utilization fluctuate from one region to another. The highest level of labour utilization is found in the Southern region and the lowest in the North-Eastern region.

Close examination of working conditions for women further reveals problems and areas where attention is needed.[27] In rural areas, where female labour force participation reaches over 70 per cent, the large majority of women work as unpaid family workers in the fields. Over 80 per cent of these family workers spent more than 40 hours per week

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25 *Report on status of women in two provinces*, p. 48, 59, 32.

26 *Report on the general conditions of parents*, p. 56, 84, 85, 86, 88.

27 For more detailed discussion, see Kanita Meesook, "The economic role of Thai women," in *Aspects of Thai Women Today*.

working. In spite of their long work hours, the income which they share with their family is often inadequate to provide for basic necessities in life. Nearly one-third receives less than 3,000 baht per year.

Among rural women who are not in the labour force, nearly one-third were reported to be working around the house or waiting for the next agricultural season. The economic contributions of these women should not be overlooked as most help to supplement family income through a wide variety of activities such as growing vegetables, raising poultry and producing handicrafts for family use.

Due to the decreasing size of land-holdings, increasing surplus labour, limited opportunities for off-farm employment, a low level of skills and education, and lack of capital an increasing number of women, particularly single young girls, are migrating to the cities in search of employment. In the cities, they often find jobs in the service, manufacturing and commercial sectors. Although the wages offered are low, the large majority of these rural-urban migrants report that their income and living conditions are improved after migration.[28] Rural-urban migration thus poses a dilemma to the government. While it often serves as a solution for the surplus farm labourers from the rural areas, it has created a host of problems for the receiving cities.

In urban areas, while there are greater opportunities for employment, particularly for young women with a low level of skills and education, other types of problems exist. A survey on working conditions of female workers in 27 factories in Bangkok reveals some of the prevailing problems: job insecurity resulting from preference for young, unattached girls, hiring practices based on daily wages, poor and often hazardous working conditions, lower than minimum legal wages, inadequate legal protection and lack of opportunities to upgrade skills.[29]

The above review confirms that the economic contributions of women clearly influence the well-being of the family and the economic development of the nation as a whole. If their contributions are to be further increased, however, there is an urgent need to upgrade the capabilities of women, promote income generating activities, lessen women's household and childcare responsibilities, and improve the working conditions of women who are already employed.

In conclusion, the overview has amply demonstrated the significant role of women in Thai society. Due to the increasing number of women in the population and in the labour force, their expected and actual contributions, and their influence over the direction of the family, the status and the conditions of women can no longer be overlooked. Several problems encountered by women become evident through this review. Some of these problems relate to both men and women, such as the shortage of health services, inadequate income and difficulty in obtaining capital and credits for investment. Other problems are more prevalent and become further magnified among women: a low level of literacy and schooling; inadequate opportunities to acquire relevant knowledge and

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28 Apichart Chamratrithirong, *Recent migrants in Bangkok Metropolis*, Bangkok, Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, 1979.

29 Chareon Siripan, *Report of the survey on the promotion of women and child labor in factories*, a paper presented to the Faculty of Social Works, Thammasart University, Bangkok, 1977.

skills; conflicts between household, childcare and economic responsibilities; and increasing gaps between parents and their more educated children. While remarkable progress has been made to attain equality in opportunities and status between men and women, disparities continue to exist among different groups of women. Women residing in the rural areas, women in the slums and women in certain ethnic groups appear to be in the greatest need of development and attention. Since rural women comprise the largest segment of these disadvantaged women and the large majority are outside the formal school system, non-formal education programmes appear to be the most promising vehicle for the development of women in the rural areas of Thailand.

Non-formal education for women in rural areas

A wide variety of non-formal education programmes has long been available to women. These programs, however, are limited in scope and generally originate from individual organizations' initiatives rather than from the government's directives. This is due to the fact that in the first two Development Plans, which aimed to bring about economic growth, emphasis was given to the development of sectors which had the highest potential for growth, and the training of professional and skilled manpower regardless of sex. It was not until the Third Development Plan that the role of women in reducing the population growth rate was recognized and recommendations were made to provide education for women, particularly in areas related to family planning. By the Fourth Development Plan, the importance of women in the developmental process was more fully recognized.[30] The Plan emphasized the need to encourage women to participate in social and economic development and called for activities to upgrade women's skills and status. The plan identified the major problems as inequality in educational opportunities between men and women and discrimination against women in occupations. Programmes outlined in the Fourth Plan are limited in scope, including intensive and short term training course, in the areas of occupation, food and nutrition, and family planning for less than 100,000 women. These programmes, however, are intended mainly to be exploratory and to serve as a catalyst for full-scale efforts in the subsequent Plan.

In the Fifth Plan, therefore, development of women is given top priority. A commission was appointed to draft both short-term plans to be implemented within the next 5 years (from 1982-1986) as well as long-term plans. Although the Plan is being finalized, policy guidelines have been formulated and sent to various agencies to draw up specific programmes. Since the Plan will undoubtedly provide guidelines for women's development activities in the next decade, it is necessary to examine the essence of the plan.[31]

The Plan focuses on 4 aspects of life of women: economic, education, culture and religion, and health and politics.

In assessing the economic role of women, the Plan identifies discrimination in economic returns from work, inferiority in education and work skills, lack of capital and

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30 "Women's role in national development in the Fourth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1977-1981), Translated version in *Aspects of Thai women today*.

31 Narong Nittayaphorn, "Guidelines for the development of women", in *Aspects of Thai Women Today*.

credits, and limited job opportunities as major shortcomings. To increase the economic contribution of women, the Plan aims to improve the quality of work skills which in turn is expected to increase job opportunities and economic returns of women. Specifically, the Plan calls for concerted efforts to increase the provision of basic and vocational education to women in rural areas, to assist in the formation of co-operatives and women's groups, to encourage the govemment and private sectors to provide loans and credits to small scale farmers and investors in rural areas, to create more labor intensive employment opportunities for women and to establish child-care centres.

In the area of education, the Plan calls attention to the inequality in educational opportunities between urban and rural women, as well as the low level of quality and limited applicability of education. In order to fully develop the potential of women, the Plan emphasizes the need to provide equal opportunities in both formal and non-formal education, to increase access to non-formal education, to organize short term vocational training courses which are suitable to local conditions, to improve the quality and the practicality of education, and to promote the acquisition of written and spoken Thai.

In the area of health, the Plan identifies problems related to the shortage of health services and insufficient knowledge in the fields of hygience, nutrition, maternal and childcare. The Plan aims to improve and expand health services, to disseminate wider knowledge and information on hygiene, healthcare and nutrition, to establish food provision centers, child-care centers and to encourage men to bear more responsibility in family planning.

In order to improve the status of women in management, community development and politics, the Plan proposes to develop more positive attitudes towards women's role in the society, to encourage women to participate and assume more responsible positions.

The prime target group of the Fifth Plan has been identified as women aged 15-44 in rural areas, with special emphasis given to women in 30 provinces classified as high priority development areas.

To implement the policy guidelines to reach these target groups, five major work plans have been identified: (1) plan for raising income and generating employment; (2) plan for providing formal and non-formal education; (3) plan for improving public health and nutritional services; (4) plan for establishing, executing and co-ordinating infra-structure; and finally, (5) plan for survey and research.

Although specific programmes to be included in the Fifth Plan have not all been formulated, major implementing agencies have been identified. Through an examination of some of the programmes implemented in the Fourth Plan in terms of objectives, coverage, resources and underlying principles, it is possible to obtain some insights into the nature of the educational and development programmes which are provided for women in the rural areas of Thailand.

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32 Khunying Aree Kultan, "Women and vocational training in Thailand: a need for programs for women in jobs for which only men receive training," a paper presented at the UNESCO Seminar on Opening-Up to Women of Vocational training and jobs traditionally occupied by men, Frankfurt, West Germany, November 11-13, 1980.

Table 9. Non-formal programmes for women classified by objectives

	Basic education	*Dissemination information*	*Skill training and income generation*	*Development of groups and local leaders*	*Moral personality and social development*
Department of Non-formal Education					
– Functional education	xx				
– Functional literacy	xx	x			
– Newspaper reading centres		xx			
– Interest groups		x	xx		
– Libraries		xx			
– Vocational schools (stationary and mobile)			xxx		
– Training of target group representatives (women, rural youths, farmers)		x	x	xx	x
– Radio correspondence education programmes	xx	xx			
– Radio programmes		xx			
Department of Vocational Education					
– Polytechnic School			xx		
Accelerated Rural		x			
Development Bureau			xx		
Department of Community Development					
Training of Women's groups			x	xx	x
– Vocational Training for Women in 29 Provinces with Malnutrition Problems			xx	x	
– Promotion of income Generation activities for rural women			xx		
Family Planning Programmes		xx			
– Training of women youth leaders	x	x	x	xx xx	x
– Model family project		x			x
Department of Health		xx			
Department of Industry Promotion					
Training in home industry			xx		
Training in Thai handicraft Promotion			xx		
– Training in weaving industry			xx		
Department of Agriculture Promotion					
– Training of farmers' wives			xx		
Department of Public Welfare					
Reform schools		x	xx	x	
Occupational development centres			x	xx	x
Department of Labour					x
– Skill Development Institutes			xx		
– Education for factory workers	x				
Private Agencies					
– The National Council of Public Welfare			xx		xx
– The National Council of Women		x	xx	x	
– The Girl Guides Association					x
– The Planned Parenthood Association			xx	x	
– The University Women's Association			xx		

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Education for disadvantaged women

Agencies. Agencies identified in the Fifth Plan as key agencies in providing education programmes to women in rural areas of Thailand are the Department of Public Health. the Department of Public Welfare, the Department of Agricultural Promotion, the Department of Industry Promotion, the Department of Labour, the Department of Community Development and the Department of Non-formal Education.

In addition, there are a large number of private agencies which organize education programmes for rural women such as the National Council of Women, the National Council of Public Welfare, the Girl Guides Association, the Planned Parenthood Association, and the University Women Association. In spite of the lack of government support, the contributions of these private agencies to the development of women have been particularly significant. During the period 1977 to 1979, for example, non-governmental agencies offered programs to over 200,000 women.[32] In an attempt to mobilize efforts for women's development, their contributions, therefore, should not be overlooked.

Objectives of programmes. Analysis of programmes offered by these agencies show that they are diverse in nature. The objectives can be classified into five major categories. These objectives are not mutually exclusive. They also tend to reinforce each other. In most cases, the programmes aim to achieve more than one objective. The classification, however, will help to reveal discrepancies between the objectives of the programme and the needs and problems of women. The major objectives are listed below.

1. To provide basic and fundamental education. These programmes aim to equip learners with basic learning and coping skills such as literacy skills, communication skills, problem solving abilities and fundamental knowledge, which are necessary for functioning in the society. Programmes designed primarily to achieve this objective are the Functional Literacy and Functional Education Programs implemented by the Department of Non-formal Education. Both programmes aim to provide education which is relevant to the life of the learners and at the same time certified as equivalent to formal school education.

2. To provide knowledge and information. In every changing society, relevant and up-to-date information is vital to the ability to adapt and cope. Programmes that fall under this category can be further classified into two types: programmes which offer information and programmes which aim to establish a system whereby continuous flow of information can be acquired.

The first type of programmes disseminates information through wall newspapers, radio programmes, films, and various forms of publication and audio-visual materials. Prominent agencies in this areas are the Department of Health, the Department of Agricultural Promotion, and the Department of Industry Promotion. The contents of the information depend on the specialization of the agencies concerned. Information on family planning and agriculture appears to be the most readily available.

The second type of programme aims not only to provide specific information but to create a network through which a regular, continuous flow of relevant and up-to-date

information will be provided. Examples of these programmes are the establishment of newspaper reading centres and libraries, and the utilization of village volunteers to become health reporters.

3. To train in various skills and to promote income generating activities. A large number of programmes implemented by the government and private agencies fall into this category. The programmes are offered by a diverse group of agencies such as the Department of Industry Promotion, the Department of Community Development, the Department of Public Welfare, and the Department of Non-formal Education. The large majority of the programmes, however, concentrate on training in production skills. Only a few programmes are able to extend the scope of training and services to cover other aspects which are necessary for income generation, such as providing capital and credits for investment, development of entrepreneurial skills and management skills, and assistance in sales and marketing. Striking examples of these more comprehensive approaches are the programmes offered by the Occupational Training Centre for the Children of Farmers at Uthai Thani, where the centre organizes training in agriculture and animal husbandry, provides investment credits for the graduates, supervises the initial activities, and purchases all products; programmes organized by the Foundation for the Promotion of Supplementary Income, where women are trained and assisted to produce handicrafts for sale; the Department of Industry Promotion which plans to integrate the training of entrepreneurial skills with production skills.

4. To promote group formation. Several agencies have employed educational programmes to promote group formation for various purposes. The Department of Agriculture Promotion, for example, encourages agricultural housewives to form groups for the improvement of agricultural productivity and family income. The Department of Community Development promotes groups as a means to improve family well-being and to influence community development. The Department of Non-formal Education utilizes groups to participate in the planning and implementation of non-formal education at the village level. There have been several successful examples of women's groups. Women's groups initiated by community development workers at Mung Mo District in Phrae Province, for example, succeeded in establishing several income generating activities.

5. To influence personality and social values. A large number of agencies such as the Department of Public Welfare, Council of Social Welfare, and the Girl Guides Association organize programmes which aim to influence personality, leadership ability, social values and social behaviour of young girls and women.

The review reveals a wide variety of programmes organized by government and private agencies. Although an evaluation of these activities is often not available, in many cases they have been shown to contribute to the improvement of the quality of women. It is necessary, therefore, to examine the extent to which women have benefited from these opportunities.

Coverage and resources. Most educational programmes in the Fourth Plan are offered to both men and women. For this reason, it is often difficult to obtain statistics on the enrolment of women except through rough estimations.

Education for disadvantaged women

Among the Basic Education programmes, available statistics seem to indicate that only a small proportion of out-of-school women is reached. In 1980, for example, the Department of Non-formal Education organized literacy education for approximately 28,889 illiterates, 60 per cent of whom were estimated to be women. As for the Functional Education courses which are equivalent to upper primary and secondary levels, around 156,000 students are enrolled in programmes organized by the Department of Non-formal Education, the Department of Public Welfare and the Department of Correction. Approximately 50 per cent of these functional education students are female.[33]

In terms of information, the out-of-school population is continuously exposed to various forms of mass media. According to an analysis of the centent of radio programmes, newspapers and journals, however, less than 25 per cent of the contents are devoted to educational information.[34] While a large number of agencies have produced materials for the dissemination of information, only a small proportion of these materials is available to the out-of-school population in rural areas. Attempts to establish sources of information where villagers can receive regular and up-to-date information have not been expanded to cover the whole country. In 1980, there were 71 provincial libraries, 291 district libraries and 8,500 newspaper reading centres established in less than 20 per cent of the villages in Thailand.[35]

The most widely available programmes are in the areas of skills training and promotion of occupations. According to the survey conducted by the National Education Council, over 10 government agencies offered non-formal vocational courses to approximately 140,000 students of both sexes.[36] According to available statistics, private agencies also offered training courses for approximately 250,000 women during the two-year period of 1977-1979.[37] There are also in existence over 680 commercial vocational institutions across the nation, over 90 per cent of which are in urban areas.[38]

In terms of programmes to promote group formation and influence social values and behaviour, the largest programme is organized by the Department of Community Development. Initiated in 1978, the programme has succeeded in training over 2,000 groups with the participation of 167,551 members.[39]

Even by the most generous estimates, basic education, skill training and group development programmes are able to provide out-of-school education to less than

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33 *Non-formal education statistics*, Bangkok, Department of Non-formal Education, Ministry of Education, 1980.

34 *The role of mass media in the education of the rural population.* Bangkok, National Education Council, 1978.

35 *Non-formal education statistics*

36 *Report on the existing status of non-formal education*, Bangkok, National Education Council, 1978.

37 Kattiya Karnasuta, "Education and development program for women".

38 *Directory of Private Educational Institutions*, Bangkok, National Education Council, 1977.

39 *Report of the seminar on Coordination Among agencies for the Development of Rural Women*, Thailand, February 5-6, 1980.

300,000 women a year. Through mass media and organized programmes to disseminate information, a wider group of women is reached, but only a small proportion of the information provided through the commercial mass media is educational.

In spite of the relatively limited coverage of existing education and development programmes, it should be noted that most government agencies have at their disposal, resources, personnel and institutional networks which can be utilized to undertake women's development activities. The Department of Community Development, for example, has community development workers at the provincial, district and sub-district levels. The Department of Non-formal Education operates a network of 4 regional centres, 31 lifelong education centres, 28 mobile vocational units, and employs over 10,000 part-time instructors. The Department of Agricultural Promotion employs agricultural extension workers in all 71 provinces, and sub-district agricultural extension workers in 40 provinces. Most agencies are also training villagers to serve as volunteers to assist government workers. In addition, there are primary schools, secondary schools and other formal education resources and facilities which can be used to provide non-formal education. Through definite policy directives and better mechanisms for co-ordination, these available resources can be utilized to reach a larger group of women.

Principles of operation. In analysing educational and development programmes, one aspect that is rarely given due attention is the principles which underlie the actions of the implementing agencies. Inadequate concern for principles often leads to misallocation of resources and a short-term view of programme impact. Lack of unifying principles among programmes can also result in conflicting actions and outcomes.

To examine the extent to which educational programmes for women will complement and reinforce each other, it is necessary, therefore, to identify some of the dominant principles that seem to influence to operations of certain key agencies.

Responsiveness to the needs and conditions of the target group

Several agencies seek to provide programmes which are responsive to target groups' conditions, needs and problems. Few, however, are able to fully realize this principle in action. Many programmes are based on objectives set by the organizing agencies or the experts' views of the needs and problems of the target group, while only the details of implementation are adjusted to suit the varying conditions of the learners. Some programmes such as Thai Functional Literacy and Functional Education attempt to reach a compromise by integrating national or regional contents which are applicable to a larger group of learners with more specific contents identified and possibly developed by the learners and the teachers themselves. Other agencies such as the Department of Industry Promotion and the Department of Non-formal Education seek to provide a wide variety of courses from which the learners can choose. Only a few programmes such as the Women's Group Development Program of the Department of Community Development and the Interest Group Program organized by the Department of Non-formal Education allow the learning group to identify learning objectives and limit the role of the implementing agencies to funding, assisting and supervising.

Examination of these programmes indicates that the degree of responsiveness of the implementing agency is often hampered by a wide variety of factors such as the lack of specific data, difficulty in distinguishing felt needs, the extent to which the programmes have to fulfill other imposed objectives and organizational goals, and inadequate resources and personnel to plan and implement target specific curricula.

It is important to note that attainment of the principle in certain programmes, limited as they are, is made possible by a series of complementary actions: the willingness and the ability to decentralize technical and administrative authority and functions, trust of learner's judgement, willingness to sacrifice certain organizational goals, increased sharing of data and resources among agencies, and extensive development and utilization of locally available resources.

Participation. The need for local participation is often emphasized by various agencies. A review of existing programmes indicates that they are used for different purposes. Some agencies such as the Department of Community Development encourage local involvement in planning and implementation of educational and development programmes. The Lifelong Education Center of the Department of Non-formal Education develops target group representatives to assist in learning needs identification, to organize learning groups, to operate programmes and to serve as local resource persons for educational programmes. The Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture utilize village volunteers to further disseminate knowledge and information gained from the programme to other villagers. Some programmes implemented by the Department of Non-formal Education regard group participation as a means to increase dialogue, and the sharing of ideas and identification of solutions to common problems; while others employ group pressure to enforce acceptance of certain pre-determined actions.

Due to the differing role of participantion among programmes, the types of people encouraged to participate, the nature of their participation and the approaches used to develop, elicit and sustain participation differ widely. In planning educational programmes for women, it is necessary, therefore, that the exact contribution of the loosely used term "participation" be clarified.

Self-Reliance. Within recent years, the principle of self-reliance has become widely accepted both as an educational objective and as an underlying principle for action. Among the Thai programmes, however, the term has different and often conflicting implications. For several programmes, self-reliance simply means that the villagers should pay or at least contribute in some way for the services received so that the programme will have the resources to extend its services to a larger group of recipients. Other programmes strive through every means to increase the income and the standard of living of the villagers so that they can become financially independent. The Department of Community Development encourages villagers to initiate and to be responsible for development actions, while government workers provide guidance and assistance when the activities are beyond the villagers' capabilities and resources. In the Functional Literacy Program of the Department of Non-formal Education, several influences of the principle of self-reliance are reflected.

In assisting learners to deal with the problems in their lives, the programme aims to increase self-confidence among the learners, to equip learners with learning tools, to encourage sharing of ideas and to develop critical thinking ability in identifying the most appropriate solution.

In spite of concern for the development of self-reliance, existing efforts tend to be isolated and sporadic. Among the overriding issues that are plaguing many agencies are how to assist the target group without creating a sense of dependency, how to achieve individual self-reliance and maintain a sense of belonging at community and national level, to what extent should the speed of development be delayed to insure that the villagers are self-reliant in every step of development and, finally, whether isolated efforts by educational and development agencies can create a sense of self-reliance.

Equality. Research findings on the disparities in opportunities and conditions of different segments of the population have generated immense concern for equality, particularly in opportunities to benefit from educational and development programmes. Several measures have been undertaken towards this end. The Department of Non-formal Education, for example, is trying out several innovative approaches to reach leaners in remote areas such as through radio and correspondence programmes, mobile vocational teams, experimental lifelong learning centers, and walking teachers. Extension workers from the Departments of Health, Community Development and Agriculture are sent to serve at the sub-district and village levels. The Department of Community Development has identified 29 provinces with urgent nutritional problems which require immediate remedial action, while the Department of Non-formal Education firmly instructs all operating units to devote approximately 80 per cent of their resources to programmes outside municipal areas.

In spite of definite directives on the attainment of equality, there remain several obstacles that need to be overcome, such as lack of motivation, particularly among the poverty-stricken target groups, high levels of investment and difficulties in operating programmes in remote areas, and the need for intensive and sustained efforts before a programme will yield results. For many agencies, however, the most pressing dilemma is how to reach a compromise between the need to attain target group participation and the need to extend the services to the most disadvantaged groups. In most cases, those who suffer from inequality of education are not willing and often lack the time and resources to participate in or contribute to educational programmes.

An examination of underlying principles for action is limited by the lack of explicit statements and the discrepancies between expressed principles and actual application. It amply demonstrates, however, the influence of these principles on the direction and nature of the programmes. In order to bring about integration and sustained impact in women's educational programmes, attempts must be made to establish clear unifying principles among key implementing agencies.

A review of the Fifth Plan and existing educational programmes portrays a highly promising situation. As drawn up, the Plan provides a supportive framework for future actions. There are already in existence a considerable concern for women's development, several existing programmes which can serve as a foundation, vast resources which can be

utilized, and experience from past efforts which should be analysed as valuable lessons for all implementing agencies.

Some observations on the women's development plan and programmes

The Fifth Social and Economic Development Plan should be regarded as a major step forward in the development of women. For the first time, the importance of women is given due recognition. For the first time, various government agencies receive policy directives to mobilize their efforts in order to reach over 5 million women over the five years of the Fifth Plan. Analysis of the Plan and experiences from programmes implemented in the Fourth Plan indicate areas where careful consideration should be given if development efforts are to have an impact on the well-being and the quality of Thai women.

Identification of problems. In the Fifth Plan, an extensive list of problems related to women is compiled. While this listing has served as the basis for policy formulation, there are several limiting factors that should be noted. The problems identified are often stated in global terms with no statistics to indicate the magnitude of the problems, particularly the number of women affected. Problems are not ranked in order of priority but equal emphasis is given to all. There is a tendency to treat the problems in each aspect of women's life in isolation even though many are linked. The causes of problems and the causal relationships among problems are not fully examined. In many cases, only causes of problems which are related to women are identified even though the roots of the problem may stem from the attitudes and practices of men. Emphasis is given to problems encountered by women even though many problems are pertiment to all Thais and must be understood within the context of the entire family unit.

These limitations have certainly resulted from the lack of data and the need to rely on often dated national statistics. In identifying areas where actions could have the major impact on problems, and in designing appropriate corrective measures, therefore, it is imperative that each implementing agency further complement the efforts of the Fifth Plan by conducting target specific research which can help to further examine the priority, the magnitude and the causal relationships of problems.

Formulation of policy guidelines. The Plan suffers to a large extent from the lack of long-term goals, which are still being formulated by the National Social and Economic Board. As a result, while there are definite commitments and guidelines for the improvement of existing conditions, there is no clear direction on the final outcome of development. There is no discussion, for example, on the desirable role of women in modern day society. While there are directives on the target groups and types of programmes to be implemented, no discussion on the principles which should serve as the foundation for operation is given. As indicated in the preceding section, these hidden principles often have more impact and a longer lasting influence on the target groups. They can also lead to conflicting actions among implementing agencies. While some agencies may delay certain activities to allow for maximum target group participation, others may sacrifice participation for more immediate impact. There is a need, therefore, to agree on certain basic operating principles and to develop evaluative criteria in accordance with these principles.

The tendency to consider problems in isolation is also reflected in the policy guidelines. No clear directions are given on how programmes in different sectors of development should reinforce and complement each other or once certain programmes have ended, what follow-up activities should be provided. In improving nutritional conditions, for example, attempts to educate women on nutrition issues need to be accompanied by efforts to deal with the poverty of the family.

Policy guidelines also tend to focus on measures which will deal directly with women. Inadequate attention is given to measures which will influence prohibiting factors in the environment in which women live. In attempting to improve the working conditions of women, for example, there is a need to educate and to assist women to form groups along with the efforts to educate employers on women's rights and to enforce legal measures.

Identification of Target Groups. In identifying the priority target group, the Plan helps to focus the attention of the implementing agencies on sectors which are in the greatest need of development. However, certain precautions need to be taken in such an approach. Experience from previous educational programmes has amply demonstrated failures to reach women who could benefit most from the programmes. This is due to several factors such as lack of data at the field level to plan implementing strategy, the inadequate recognition of the value of education among disadvantaged women, the limited applicability of learning contents, negative attitudes towards education on the part of the learners themselves and their family, lack of free time, and poverty. It should be recognized, therefore, that attempts to increase educational opportunities for disadvantaged groups will be futile unless corresponding efforts are undertaken to assist them to make use of these newly available opportunities.

In extending limited services to cover a larger segment of the population, the implementing agencies will have to make careful comparisons between providing a more comprehensive programme to a limited number of women or providing one-shot services to a larger group of women. Finally, it should be pointed out that the prime target group covers the wide age range of 15-44. As indicated in the overview on the conditions and problems of women, significant differences exist across the age groups in terms of level of literacy and educational attainment, educational aspirations, marital status, responsibilities in household management and child care, types of employment available, roles in the family and in the community. Programmes which aim to reach the priority target groups, therefore, should be designed to cater for their different needs and conditions.

Implementing Agencies. As indicated earlier, the extent to which the plans will be realized depends primarily on the commitment and capabilities of the implementing agencies.

While a review of existing programmes has indicated that there are several agencies potentially capable of undertaking the tasks of women's development, there remain several obstacles that should be overcome. For the large majority of government agencies, women's development is not one of their priority organizational functions. Many become involved as a means to reach other goals, and others are activated temporarily by outside

funding agencies. There is a need, therefore, to insure long-term commitments and a sense of responsibility towards women's development among agencies concerned.

In terms of resources, a large majority of agencies lack the resources and expertise to implement large-scale target specific programmes which require extensive effort in research, development, planning and supervision. Many lack basic data for planning and qualified personnel who fully understand and are concerned with women's problems. Most government agencies are prevented by regulations, resources and personnel from conducting comprehensive programmes or experimenting with more innovative approaches to education. At the same time, private agencies which often are flexible enough to meet the needs of the target group and to initiate a more comprehensive and innovative approach lack the institutional network to expand the programme to a wide segment of the population. In mobilizing existing efforts for the development of women, therefore, there is a need to search for the best mix between the strengths of government and private agencies.

If the Fifth Plan truly strives to make a long-lasting impact on the status and conditions of women, it cannot expect the implementing agency to simply absorb women's development tasks into its present framework without certain changes and redirection. Attempts must be made to create a long-term commitment, to improve institutional infra-structure, personnel and resources and to bring about greater co-ordination between private and government agencies.

Nature of Programmes. In the preceding section, four major types of programmes are identified. Since these programmes are most likely to constitute the major development activities, lessons learned from past experiences should be examined.

Basic Education programmes. In view of the increasing numbers of functional illiterates, the low level of education among certain groups of women and the apparent lack of basic knowledge and information on issues which are crucial to functioning in society, basic education should be considered as a crucial component of women's development programmes.

Basic Education programmes are often the most difficult to plan and implement. Experiences from the Thai Functional Literacy programmes have indicated that to make fully operational the concept of Basic Education programmes, there is a need to integrate at least three components of education: the teaching of communication and learning skills as means to acquire, store and transmit information; the provision of fundamental knowledge and information which are relevant to the lives of the learners; and finally, the development of certain transferrable coping skills which will assist the learners to become self-reliant in dealing with problems in their daily life. In the Thai Functional Literacy Program such coping skills have been termed collectively *Khit phen* abilities, which include a conscious awareness of one's own capabilities and limitations in dealing with problems; the ability to identify problems, to search for causes of problems, to acquire information on possible solutions, and to make decisions by taking into consideration one's own needs and potentials in bringing about the solution, as well as the norms and values of society and appropriate technical information; and finally, the

ability to implement decisions and evaluate the outcome. In other programmes, such coping abilities are identified as problem solving abilities, scientific reasoning or critical thinking.

In addition to the functional content of the curricula, learning approaches should be suitable to the learning characteristics of learners and should promote the development of self-directed learning abilities among the learners. It should provide an avenue where men and women can meet to discuss problems of mutual concern. The organizational approaches likewise should be flexible enough to cater to learners in a wide variety of living conditions. Most important, experiences from the Thai programme have clearly demonstrated that Basic Education programmes should not be organized in isolation but should be an integral part of a life-long learning system.

Programmes to disseminate information. The importance of programmes to disseminate information is strongly emphasized in the Fifth Plan. It proposes, for example, that mass media programmes be employed to reach over 90 per cent of the target population. In providing increased information to the rural population, several factors should be taken into consideration. In the past, information provided was often based on the experts' ideal solution. This has resulted in limited applicability and increasing gaps between desired conditions and the conditions the learners are able to attain. Care should be taken, therefore, to disseminate information which will assist the learners to learn about themselves and their communities, along with relevant, up-to-date and applicable technical information. Attempts should be made to establish sources of information where women can acquire information whenever needed. Several models of these sources of information have been explored: the newspaper reading centres, libraries, the use of voluntary health reporters, and extension workers. But each approach is able to cover only a small segment of the population. In the Fifth Plan, these approaches should be further examined and developed. Experiences from previous programmes have also revealed that informal sharing of information among villagers is often more effective than information obtained from outside sources. Attempts must be made to develop local resource persons and to encourage dialogue among women. Most important, programmes to disseminate information should be accompanied by attempts to develop a critical sense of judgement among learners to determine the validity, accuracy and the applicability of received information to their own lives.

Programmes to develop skills and to generate income. In the Fifth Plan, emphasis is given to the promotion of income generating activities of women's groups to supplement or substitute for farm income. A review of existing programmes indicates that training in vocational skills alone rarely leads to the establishment of viable income generating activities. If the Plan seeks to influence income generating capabilities of women it must be willing to support a more comprehensive approach. Experiences from some of the successful programmes reveal certain crucial components that must be included. In identifying earning opportunities to be developed, for example, consideration should not be given to the availability of resources of the organizing agencies or the interests of the learners alone, but should be based on a careful examination of potential clientele, availability of capital, resources, facilities and equipment required to conduct the activity;

and the needs, interests and free time of the target groups. Furthermore, it should be recognized that the provision of goods and services constitutes only a small segment of successful earning activities. Programmes should attempt to promote outlooks, attitudes and other related skills such as management, accounting, efficient work habits, marketing, quality control, abilities to recruit and train new participants. Identification of these skills depends on the scope of the activities. In many cases when the activity involves a large number of women, not everyone needs in mastering all the skills but can be trained according to her own responsibilities and interests. Once the program is in operation, there is a need to follow up and provide assistance at least until the learners involved are able to function as a group. In many programmes, it is found that the group is able to transfer skills and experiences gained from one earning activity to initiate another on their own.

Due to the need to provide such a comprehensive program, it may be beyond the capabilities of any single agency to promote income generating activities. Attempts must be made, therefore, to co-ordinate the services of various government and private agencies in promoting the earning activity of a specific target group.

While all skill training programmes should contribute to income generation, other outcomes which can be achieved with more limited resources and personnel should not be overlooked. Several programmes have contributed to the improvement of the quality of life of women by providing skills which enable women to improve life conditions, to save on certain goods and services which they otherwise would have to purchase or pay for, to upgrade the skills of those who are already employed, to become self-employed or to pass on skills to their children or others in the communities.

Programmes to promote group formation. The Fifth Plan emphasizes the need to promote the formation of women's groups as a means to bring about improvement in the quality of life of women and the community as a whole. Although groups have constituted major components in a large number of existing programmes the outcomes and the process of group development have rarely been documented. A few observations, however, can be made from past experiences.

The main objective of group formation programmes in the past has been to create momentum for change and improvement. Composition of membership, therefore, has generally been based on natural groupings or a few individuals with common interests. Women who are economically and socially disadvantaged and who are burdened with a host of responsibilities and problems rarely join in such group activities. Attemps must be made, therefore, to widen the scope of activities so that women with differing needs, interests, and backgrounds can participate. It should also be pointed out that while single sex grouping can provide an opportunity for women to share common problems, if the group is to exert any influence over the well-being of the family and the community, there is a need to elicit support from other members of the community. Ultimately, the activities of the group should be integrated into the normal lifestream of the community.

While it is often easy to initiate formation of a group, the maintenance of a group is more difficult to attain. In the few successful examples, several contributing factors

can be isolated. One, there is a need to continue providing assistance and follow-up until the group is able to function on its own. Often agencies motivate women to form groups but fail to provide necessary follow-up activities. Two, while initial incentives for group formation may be introduced from the outside, the group should be assisted to gradually develop its own directions and objectives. Respect for the judgement of the group and willingness to allow the group to experience mistakes and failures tend to develop a greater sense of responsibility, a higher level of independence and subsequently result in more thorough decisions. Three, women's groups should not be seen as a means to more effectively achieve organizational goals but should be regarded more as a means to assist women to cope with their own problems. Successful groups may, in fact, result in greater and more selective demands for services from organizing agencies. Finally, even if the initial grouping cannot be sustained, often it is adequate to develop positive attitudes towards group actions, respect for others and some experiences in group activities, which will enable women to re-form groups later on when necessary.

The provision of any short-term non-formal education programme no matter how effective, cannot be expected to equip women with all the knowledge and skills necessary for coping with problems in their changing environment. Learning skills and fundamental knowledge provided through Basic Education programmes, for example, need to be accompanied by increased availability of information and greater access to skill training opportunities. In utilizing non-formal education as a vehicle for women's development, therefore, one should not be content with attempts to expose the largest number of women to any type of non-formal education programme but should aim to provide access to programmes which will reinforce and complement each other. Furthermore, the role of informal education in women's development should not be underestimated. While implementing agencies ofteh lack of the resources to organize a series of complementary non-formal education programmes, they can help to create a more conducive environment for informal learning by developing resource centres, training local leaders and resource persons, influencing the contents of folk arts and mass media and, finally, increasing opportunities for women to meet and learn from each other informally.

Concluding remarks. This paper has confirmed the significant role of women in Thai society and has identified a host of problems which are undermining the well-being and the capabilities of women, particularly those living in rural areas. Examination of women's development policies in the Fifth Social and Economic Plan and existing non-formal education programmes illustrates definite government commitments, and points out areas where subsequent efforts should be undertaken by implementing agencies. While non-formal education programmes have shown promising contributions to the development of women, it is recognized that non-formal education programmes cannot achieve this aim in isolation. Along with the expansion and improvement of non-formal education, a women's development strategy should aim to bring about greater access to formal education among disadvantaged women, revision of formal education curricula and a systematic improvement of the informal learning environment. Only through an integration of formal, non-formal and informal education can truly lifelong learning opportunities for women be provided and a basic precondition for women's development attained.

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